

Child Care and COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for Providers

Note: This information will be updated frequently. Please check back regularly for updates.

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GENERAL

How do I get information about COVID-19 in Utah, including information about symptoms and efforts to prevent spread in my program?

Information about COVID-19 symptoms and preventative measures as well as who to contact about the virus are available at coronavirus.utah.gov.

SAFETY MEASURES

What signs should I look for to determine if a child or an employee is sick?

Please use the supplemental guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control in its [guidance for child care programs that remain open](#).

There are six symptoms to look for in children, your program staff and visitors:

- (1) Fever
- (2) Dry cough
- (3) Shortness of breath

- (4) Sore throat
- (5) Sudden change in taste or smell
- (6) Muscle aches and pains

If children, parents, employees or other visitors exhibit these symptoms, they should not be allowed into the facility until health care providers are contacted to make sure they are healthy enough to be present in child care. In many cases, these symptoms are related to other common illnesses or allergies, but a health provider should still be contacted before interacting with others.

What should I do if I am concerned about COVID-19 in my facility?

Contact your local health department and they will direct you with the appropriate steps to take. To find your local health department visit ualhd.org. You can also visit coronavirus.utah.gov for information.

Can I deny access to Child Care Licensing and other agency visitors to protect our children from COVID-19?

No. As long as you are open for business, you are to be in full compliance with licensing rules. This includes permitting staff from Child Care Licensing to enter your program to conduct health and safety inspections. As visitors, they should also be screened for COVID-19 symptoms before they enter your facility.

The Office of Child Care and its partners may be visiting programs or conducting observations beginning Fall 2020 but only programs voluntarily participating in the Peer Learning Communities (PLC) Project. For those programs, all observations will be coordinated and scheduled with program administration in advance. There will be no observations conducted of child care programs not participating in the PLC Project.

What safety precautions should I be implementing in our programs to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19?

On May 28, 2020, the Child Care Licensing program instituted new health and safety protocols that apply to all child care providers. Those protocols were outlined in CCL's [letter](#) issued on that date. These protocols are accompanied by a [webinar](#) hosted by Child Care Licensing that is also available to provide additional information. Additional guidance is available from the Centers for Disease Control in their [guidance for child care programs that remain open](#).

Providers must also follow any additional instructions from their local health department.

Are child care programs requiring the wearing of face coverings?

Face coverings are highly recommended for all children, two years old and older, and for every staff member. Face masks should NOT be worn by children younger than two, anyone who has trouble breathing, sleeping children and anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or unable to remove a mask without assistance. Child Care Licensing has released a statement and recommendations about face masks for child care. [Read more...](#)

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES)

What happens to subsidies if children temporarily stop attending or I temporarily close because of COVID-19?

Until September 30, 2020, if children have stopped attending or a program is temporarily closed, providers will continue to receive subsidy payments based on enrollment for families who remain eligible for DWS subsidy payments and who have not reported a change in providers. Once the child is no longer considered enrolled, has reported a change in providers or if the parent no longer meets the eligibility requirements of the child care program, child care payments for that child will be discontinued. Email occ@utah.gov to report if a child is no longer enrolled in your program.

Effective October 1, 2020, this temporary policy will end. Workforces Services will no longer pay based on the enrollment of the child. This includes programs that are temporarily closed. Beginning on that day, a child must attend at least a minimum of eight hours in the month in order to retain the subsidy payment.

How long is a “temporary” closure?

Effective October 1, 2020, the Office of Child Care will define a temporary closure as a closure that lasts no longer than 14 calendar days. This definition is for purposes of receiving grant and child care subsidy funding from the Office of Child Care and may differ from Child Care Licensing’s definition.

Do families still need to pay their child care subsidy program co-payment?

Beginning May 1, 2020, the Department of Workforce Services will temporarily stop assessing co-payments to families receiving child care subsidy payments. Workforce Services will evaluate this temporary policy change on an ongoing basis and evaluate when it will return to its policy of assessing co-payments. Although this change applies

to co-payments assessed by Workforce Services, it does not apply to any additional charges assessed by child care programs.

Will my program be assessed an overpayment from Workforce Services if a child covered by child care subsidies comes to my program sick and I refuse to allow them to attend out of concern for my staff and other children in my care?

No. An overpayment will not be assessed in this situation.

Will the 8-hour rule apply during this time?

Until September 30, 2020, Workforce Services will temporarily waive the 8-hour rule and continue to pay providers for children who remain eligible for Workforce Services child care subsidies and remain enrolled. However, if a parent enrolls a child in a new child care facility, the child is no longer considered enrolled at the first facility and as a result, the first facility will not be paid subsidy funds for that child in future months. Beginning October 1, 2020, the 8-hour rule will apply.

Will current Workforce Services child care subsidy cases close if parents are not working?

Parents must continue to meet the eligibility requirements of the program to remain eligible for the subsidy program. Through September 30, 2020, providers will still receive payment for families covered by child care subsidies even if they are no longer bringing children to your program as long as they are still enrolled and have not reported a change. If the parent reports a change in providers, they are no longer considered enrolled. No payment will be issued the following month. Beginning October 1, 2020, Workforce Services will no longer pay based on enrollment.

Is subsidy available to parents of school-age children who need child care on days when the school is providing distance learning (i.e. remote education) one to three days each week and onsite school the other days during the week?

Yes. Payment increases may be available for children increasing from part-time to full-time care; however, a family will not receive additional funds if the child is already receiving the maximum amount of care allowable on their case.

For any child that changes to full-time, please report the child's full name, case number and a description of the changes in care to occ@utah.gov. The parent may also contact Workforce Services to report this change.

What changes do I need to report in the Workforce Services Provider Portal?

At this time, child care providers must continue to report changes such as custom rates and credits in a timely manner to avoid payment errors. Child care subsidies will continue to be paid to providers based on enrollment of children covered by subsidies, unless the family notifies Workforce Services that they have changed providers or no longer meet the eligibility requirements of the child care program. Additionally, if a provider knows the children are no longer enrolled or no longer considers the children enrolled, the provider should send an email to occ@utah.gov to report the children are no longer enrolled. Payments will be stopped for the following month. Beginning October 1, 2020, providers should resume reporting a child is no longer attending directly in the Workforce Services Provider Portal.

Who should I contact with questions about subsidy payments?

Questions for Workforce Services should be directed to the Office of Child Care Provider Helpline email at occ@utah.gov or call 866-435-7414, option 5 then 1.

Who should I contact with questions about child care licensing?

Contact your licensor or Child Care Licensing at 888-287-3704.

STAFFING & RATIOS**Can I increase ratios and groups sizes going over my approved capacity to help with the need for child care?**

No.

I have several employees who are either sick or at high risk because of their age and therefore unable to work. What do I do if they decide to stay home?

For licensed child centers, Child Care Licensing has an Emergency Ratio Variance in place to assist you. Please consult the [center interpretation manual](#) for more information. The explanation of these variances are discussed on section 10, page 2 of the manual.

Family licensed facilities have the ability to use an emergency substitute as it is also stated in the rule.

Will I be able to use substitute teachers who have not received a background check or health and safety training if I have staff who are sick?

No.

Will background checks still be processed by Child Care Licensing?

Yes. As of August 20, 2020, Child Care Licensing is conducting comprehensive background checks. These background checks include fingerprinting for all new employees, as well as individuals who have a temporary background check clearance with Child Care Licensing. Until December 31, 2020, there will be no fees charged for background checks, including fingerprinting.

Where can my new staff members or members who received temporary background check clearances get their fingerprints taken for their comprehensive background checks?

A current list of Live Scan vendors can be found at [Live Scan Fingerprint Locations](#) but please call first as many are still closed or may require an appointment.

Is the government shutting down facilities with more than 20 children in care?

No. Child Care Licensing issued [new emergency conditions of operation](#) on May 28, 2020, that explains the group size restrictions in place during this temporary period.

For both licensed homes and centers, the provider must not go over their approved capacity. Center providers must limit indoor groups to 20 or fewer individuals including children, household members and staff. For groups of school-age children, providers may have up to 20 children plus one caregiver. If there is more than one group, those groups must be separated by full, solid walls that are higher than 6 feet. If using the outdoor play area, providers may have up to 40 children plus up to 10 caregivers, granted their outdoor square footage allows for that number of children.

Do the emergency child care site ratios, capacity and group sizes apply to all child care providers who remain open and operating as usual?

No. Although they are similar at this time, there are several differences. Child Care Licensing issued the [Phase 3 Emergency Conditions](#) for operations to all child care providers. This document outlines the standards for all open child care providers and includes current rules for ratios, capacity, and group sizes.

Emergency Child Care approved sites have additional restrictions. To name a few, they cannot care for more than 24 children in centers and no more than eight children in homes. They are also required to always have two caregivers with every group of children and no more than 32 individuals present at the facility for centers, including children and staff.

CHILD CARE CENTER CLOSURES & LICENSING

I am worried about the financial impact to my business if there are extended quarantines and this is impacting my decision to close my program. What should I do?

Before making any decisions about closing your program, contact your local health department and they will direct you with the appropriate steps to take. You can also visit coronavirus.utah.gov for information.

If your program is temporarily losing enrollment and that is causing you to consider closing during this time, please contact your licensor or Child Care Licensing at 1-888-287-3704 before making this decision.

What is the Office of Child Care doing to support programs that are remaining open despite decreasing enrollment?

On April 15, 2020, the COVID-19 Child Care Taskforce and the Office of Child Care released the Child Care Operations Grant. *Licensed child care programs and residential certificate providers were able to apply for this grant through August 31, 2020.* After that date, programs complying with all of the requirements of the Operations Grant including submission of required documentation will have the option to have their Operations Grant Payment Agreement amended to receive a flat monthly amount each month from October 2020 through December 2020.

How do I know if I should close my child care center?

If you are contemplating closing due to health risks in your community or in your program, Child Care Licensing recommends that providers first contact their local health department to discuss those concerns.

If your program is temporarily losing enrollment and that is causing you to consider closing during this time, please contact your licensor or Child Care Licensing at 888-287-3704 before making this decision.

If I decide to close my child care center, am I required to report the closure?

Yes. If you are closing your center, please contact your licensor or Child Care Licensing at 888-287-3704 before making that decision.

Will I lose my license if I temporarily close?

Child Care Licensing will not close your license as long as you are only closed temporarily and wish to remain active. You should contact Child Care Licensing to update them on your plans.

A child care program may close temporarily or close permanently during the COVID-19 crisis. What is the difference between a temporary closure and a permanent closure?

Temporary closure means that the provider **does not lose** their license.

With one exception, closing **temporarily** is mainly the provider's decision. Being temporarily closed means that the facility is not serving children at the moment, but could re-open when the provider decides it is safe to do so. The provider will have to contact Child Care Licensing to let them know when they close temporarily and when they decide to reopen. The exception is when the local or state health department orders child care facilities to temporarily close. If that is the case, the same authority that ordered the closure will decide when it is safe to open again.

For a temporary closure, Child Care Licensing will not deactivate the facility's license. This means that the provider will not have to apply for a new license once it is safe to open. They will just start serving children as they were before the temporary closure because they do not lose their license.

Permanent closure means the provider **does lose** their license. A **permanent** closure can also be the provider's or the health department's decision. A permanent closure means that the provider is closed for business and that, in order to open again, they will have to apply for a new license and complete the entire licensing process before they are allowed to open. If the provider decides to permanently close, they will have to let Child Care Licensing know. The health department may permanently close a facility if the provider does not abide by the rules and additional protocols set for the COVID-19 emergency situation.

Do I need to apply to receive Emergency Child Care approval through Child Care Licensing to remain open?

No. To remain open, currently licensed providers must comply with the temporary conditions stated in [the letter sent by Child Care Licensing on May 28, 2020](#).

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

If we offer virtual, interactive programming to families for at least three hours per day, does our program still qualify for reimbursement or do we physically have to have kids in our facility?

This depends on the funding source of the grant your program receives through the Office of Child Care (OCC). Most of the funding that the OCC provides for after-school services requires programs to provide direct child care services. Please contact your OCC Program Specialist if you have questions regarding the ability to invoice OCC for virtual programming. Grantees are also encouraged to contact the Utah State Board of Education about the availability of funding for virtual, interactive programming.

Can our employees continue to be paid for participating in training through the Utah Afterschool Network, as long as hours and course completion are documented?

If the program is providing onsite care to children, employees can be paid to participate in professional development activities. If the only activity in which your program is engaged is remote professional development activities then grant funds cannot be utilized because it falls outside the scope of the legal agreement between the Department of Workforce Services and the after-school program.

If our staff are working to support other agencies, such as school district food services, can we be reimbursed for their pay?

No. This is not an allowable expense for reimbursement.

OTHER

Will I continue to receive payments through the Child and Adult Care Food Program during this time?

Yes. The food program is continuing to provide services and payments for children attending your program. Please contact your individual food provider with any questions or concerns you may have.

If a program needs to close for a short period of time due to the COVID-19, will insurance cover the cost of the facility that has closed?

Please consult your insurance agent for guidance on answering this question.

Can providers require payment from private pay families to hold their spots while child care is not provided?

Private business owners set their own policies and practices. However, child care providers are encouraged to be mindful of the impact COVID-19 is having on our overall community.

Is the Office of Child Care still rating programs through the Child Care Quality System?

As of June 1, 2020, the Office of Child Care is not accepting new applications to participate in the Child Care Quality System (CCQS) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All certified quality ratings previously awarded are being extended until summer 2021. You can find more information regarding CCQS and COVID-19 at jobs.utah.gov/covid19/ccqsfaq.pdf.

How will the Office of Child Care be supporting quality improvement in child care programs during this time?

The Office of Child Care is continuing to support quality improvement both through its professional development system, as well as program coaching and other resources to implement best practices in child care programs. To learn more about the ways the Office of Child Care is supporting quality improvement in child care programs, please review the [information about the Child Care Quality System](#) available online.